

THE FUNCTION OF RĀGAS
IN JAINA KATHĀ LITERATURE

For nigh onto five decades there has flourished a keen interest in rāgamālā illustrations, the sets of rāga- and rāgiṇī-paintings whose contents are intended to depict different moods and evoke various modes for their viewers. When I encountered in Old Gujarātī texts rāga-terms, I decided their examination necessary to understand their function and to determine their relationship, if any, to rāgamālā tradition.

Old Gujarātī kathā-texts are divided into numbered sections or *ḍhālas*, often with rāga-captions to indicate, it is presumed, the mood and the musical mode with which the pertinent segment is infused. The Dhanna-Sālibhadda-Carita, on which I draw for example, has in its *ḍhāla*-captions twelve rāgas, i.e., *āsāurī* (Skt. *āsāvarī* or *aśāvarī*), *malhāra* (Skt. *malhāra*, *mallāra*), *parājīyau* (? Skt. *parājita*), *siṃdhūḍo* (cf. Skt. *siṃdhura*), *kaphī* (? Pers. *kafī*), *dhanāsarī* (Skt. *dhanāśrī*), *goḍī* (Skt. *gaudī*), *mevāḍau* (cf. Pkt. *mevāḍa*, Skt. *medapātaka* [Mewar]), *kedārū* (Skt. *kedāra*), *jayatasarī* (Skt. *jetaśrī*), *ṣambhāyati* (Skt. *khambāvatī*), and *soraṭha* (Skt. *saurāṣṭra*), and two rāgas with conjunct titles — *āsa-siṃdhū* and *gaudī-malhāra-mīśra*.

A number of the *ḍhāla*-captions contain what appear to be snips and scraps of verses which have no discernible connection with the progress of the story. They rather seem to be excerpts from other works. Moreover, the traditional musical texts have certain specifications for the performance of rāgas, for example, the *āsāurī* is described as a quiet rāga to be performed in the early morning, the *malhāra* during the rainy season (If properly executed, it creates rain.), the *kaphī* in the second quarter of the night, the *dhanāsarī* the early morning, the *goḍī* in the evening or at sunset, etc.¹ Given the size of the verse fragments, the translations of the following examples must be tentative.

1. See Index, WALTER KAUFMANN, *The Ragas of North India*, Indian University Press, 1968.

ḍhāla 4. rāga malhāra. kusala guru pūrau vaṃchita kāja. eha gīta-nī jāti. rāga malhāra.

« rāga malhāra. The clever guru accomplished the desired deed. The mode of this song is rāga malhāra ».

[This portion of the story has no reference to rain or to a guru's work. It tells of Sālibhadda's luxurious life with his thirty-two wives].

ḍhāla 6. rāga parājiyau. pūravabhava tumhe saṃbhalau. eha-nī jāti. rāga parājiyau.

« rāga parājiyau. You recalled your former birth. Its mode, rāga parājiyau ».

[No former birth figures here. Rather, it deals with the king's learning of magic blankets acquired by Bhaddā, Sālibhadda's mother, his wish to purchase one for his queen and the consequences. No mention of night which parājiyau requires.

ḍhāla 9. rāga dhanāsari. āpa savāratha jaga sahu. e deśi.

« rāga dhanāsari. You are the desire of the world. This is the mode ».

[No reference to early morning in this segment which this rāga requires, nor does the fragment verse fit. Here, after meeting the king, Sālibhadda becomes aware of mundane existence and is deeply troubled].

ḍhāla 20. rāga soraṭha. prītama tujhe muṣa caṃdramā. e ḍhāla. rāga soraṭha.

« rāga soraṭha. Dearest your face is the moon. This is the ḍhāla ».

[No occasion for affectionate passion here nor for eventide. This episode deals with the concern of Subhaddā, Sālibhadda's sister, over his, Dhanna's, decision to leave mundane existence and become a muni with Sālibhadda. Subhaddā and his other six co-wives are distressed].

ḍhāla 23. samaya goyama ma kari pramāda. e ḍhāla. (No rāga is given for this section).

« Gotama, [at this] time do not commit pramāda ("arrogance, pride"). This is the ḍhāla ».

[This section describes the vain attempts of Sālibhadda's mother and of his thirty-two wives to persuade him to abandon his decision to become a muni. However, Gotama, Mahāvīra's disciple, is present in the area and has been instrumental in the dīkṣā, the instruction, of Sālibhadda and of Dhanna. The verse fragment can be read to say: « Gotama [says], "Do not be proud". This might fit the section. Furthermore, a case can be made for another verse fragment, e.g., ḍhāla 3 which reads: rāga malhāra. ika dina dāsī dauḍati. eha-nī [deśi] and translates: "A servant girl runs (or comes running)". This section describes

Bhaddā's pregnancy and Sālibhadda's birth which is announced to Gobhadda, the father. The text reads: *eka dina āvī dāsī kahai. phalyā vaṃchita kāja*: "One day, a servant-girl came and announced the longed-for event had taken place" » (I'll return to this)].

In several *ḍhālas* the verse fragments vary. In *ḍhāla* 19, for which only one *rāga* is given, the manuscripts fall into three groups under their verse fragments, e.g.,

ḍhāla 19. *munivara viharaṇa pāṃgūryā re. eha-nī jāti.*

« The excellent muni started out on his peregrinations. Its mode ».

ḍhāla 19. *kapūra huvi atiniramalo. rāga kedāru-goḍī.*

« The camphor is very pure. *rāga* kedāru-goḍī ».

ḍhāla 19. *thaṃki mhā-naī olū āvaī jī. e deṣī.*

« Wearied, we remember. This [is the] mode ».

[Again, I am not able to fit any one of the three to the section which is concerned with Subhaddā's consternation over the decision of her pampered brother to accept *dīkṣā* and become a muni].

I have not been able to identify any one of the verse fragments with the *rāga*- or *rāginī*-verses recorded in the published *rāgamāla* studies. There does not seem to be a direct connection between the structured form of these Jaina *kathās* and the transmission of the *rāgamāla* tradition which was nurtered from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries. Still the verse of *ḍhāla* 3 referring to the approach of the servant girl and *ḍhāla* 23's Gotama in its verse — and, perhaps, *ḍhāla* 19's verse, « The excellent muni started out on his peregrinations » — suggest a Jaina *rāga* — if not a Hindu *rāgamāla*-tradition. Moreover, W. Norman Brown reported in 1948² the existence in a Jaina collection of a manuscript containing *rāgamāla* paintings the verses of which were composed in a dialect of Old Western Hindi. As for problems encountered in the transmission of *rāgamāla* tradition, see page 32 in the Introduction of the Waldschmidts' *Miniatures of Musical Inspiration in the Collection of the Berlin Museum of Indian Art*³.

« ... I worked upon a text contained in the legends of 36 early miniature paintings, preserved in the Bhārat Kalā Bhavan at Banaras, comparing the stanzas with corresponding ones found in the Saṅgīta-

2. W. NORMAN BROWN, *Some Early Rajasthani Rāga Paintings*, in « Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art », no. 16, pp. 1-10. Reprinted in *India and Indology*. Selected articles by W. Norman Brown, edited by Rosane Rocher, pp. 251-55.

3. ERNST and ROSE LEONORE WALDSCHMIDT, *Miniatures of Musical Inspiration in the Collection of the Berlin Museum of Art*, part II, in « *Rāgamāla* pictures from Northern India and the Deccan », Berlin, 1975.

darpaṇa and Saṅgītasārasaṅgraha as well as on previously published Rāgamālā pictures. In doing so, I found a considerable gap between painting and text; i.e. a rather large number of miniatures have been inscribed with wrong Dhyānas. In those cases, the visions of the poem and the depictions do not correspond, permitting the conclusion that the painters and the scribes of the text did not cooperate sufficiently. It is obvious that the inscriptions of the miniatures, above all, titles, have sometimes been added later; on account of that, namings are not absolutely reliable. Generally however, literary source offer a useful key to the correct understanding of the paintings, as will become evident in the number of pictures provided with legends in the 2nd volume of this work ».

Finally, I cannot at this stage of my investigation make a conclusive statement on the operation of rāga-terminology as I have encountered it in illustrated Jaina kathā-literature. On the other hand, I hesitate to state there is no evidence for allusions to or awareness of rāga (or rāgiṇī) paintings in the illustrations of texts I have examined; not when I compare in Klaus Ebeling's *Ragamala Painting*⁴ an illustration of the Campāk, the putra of Dīpak, depicting a man being massaged or bathed by two women [see fig. 1] with the similar painting from the Dhanna-Vilāsa in the collection of the National Museum, New Delhi [fig. 2]⁵, as well as the like from Dhanna-Sālibhadda-Carita manuscripts from the Vijayendra Suri and Heeramaneek collections [figs. 3 and 4]⁶. And, also, the illustration of the Kāccheli Rāgiṇī of Dīpak in Ebeling [fig. 5] in which is seen a young woman watching two rams fighting and the ram contest in the lower half of the painting from the Dhanna-Vilāsa [fig. 6]. Furthermore, see the Waldschmidt's remarks about the representation of the Kāccheli Rāgiṇī⁷ and their reference to the « illustration of a quite similar fight » in the Berlin Collection, together with their figure 72 which duplicates, the central tree, bushes and two birds aside, fig. 6. Their statement « the miniature... has no concern with a visualization of Rāgiṇī Kāccheli » I find difficult to accept as a final decision. In view of the demonstrated faults in the preservation of the tradition (See, especially, the quote, above, in re their experiences with the miniatures of the Bhārat Kalā Bhavan in Banaras), I must beg to differ, for I find it difficult to visualize a rāgamālā-sophisticate not recognizing in a painting — with or without caption or verse, or none at all — the constituent elements of a rāga/rāgiṇī with the appropriate appreciation.

4. KLAUS EBELING, *Ragamala Painting*, Basel, Paris, New Delhi, 1973, pp. 279 and 288.

5. I am pleased to have the opportunity to express to Dr. C. Sivaramamurti and his staff my deep appreciation of their generous help during my work in the Museum's manuscript collection.

6. I have lost track of these two manuscripts. Recent inquiries have led to naught.

7. *Op. cit.*, p. 134.